



Montgomery County Council

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Contact: Patrick Lacefield 240-777-7939 or Jean Arthur 240-777-7934

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Statement by Council President Blair Ewing on DC Area Traffic Congestion Studies

"Traffic congestion is a major concern in our metropolitan area. We've got to attack the problem and attack it in a way that makes good sense. By investing more in transit and selected road improvements we are doing something right – and we need to keep at it.

"The Texas Transportation Institute's (TTI) annual congestion study, released today, shows that rush-hour congestion in the Washington DC area dropped to the fourth worst this year from the second worst ranking announced last year. That's good news, though not nearly good enough.

"Equally interesting is the Surface Transportation Policy Project's 'Congestion Burden Index,' which measures how many people have to deal with congestion. It shows that our area ranks 31st worst, out of 68 metropolitan areas. That's because 23 percent of our workers aren't driving. We are giving our workers more transportation options and ensuring that fewer of them have to be affected by congestion on the roads.

"It's clear that we can't build our way out of congestion. TTI data for the Washington DC area shows that our population has risen 12.6 percent since 1990 and we've increased our road lane miles by 14.5 percent – but daily miles driven have increased by 26.9 percent. This suggests the rise in congestion has less to do with a shortage of roads than with increased driving. The TTI data shows that, even though road-building has outstripped population growth, congestion has grown worse. Travel delay is actually higher on average in the 23 metro areas that built the most roads.

"Road-building is often ineffective because adding capacity actually generates more travel, both because people take additional trips or longer trips on the road and because it creates new development and sprawl.

"Transit use nationwide has grown by 21 percent over the past five years. And we know that there's much more demand there – for more and more frequent Metro trains, for light rail up the I-270 corridor, for a Purple Line, and for transit links to Dulles Airport. More and more, public opinion shows increased support for alternative transportation options and less support for road-building." # # #